

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

February 24, 2020

Michelle Edwards, President
Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
1350 Eye Street, NW, Suite 560
Washington, DC 20005
Via email: medwards@acics.org

Dear Ms. Edwards:

On February 15, 2020, USA Today published the enclosed article regarding the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS or the agency) and its accreditation of Reagan National University (RNU or the institution). The article includes information that ACICS accredited RNU, which is alleged, based on research conducted by the journalists, to not be operational. The article indicates that RNU lacks faculty and students and does not have a physical presence. These allegations raise questions as to the effectiveness of the agency's evaluation and monitoring of its applicant and member institutions. As of today, the ACICS website states that the RNU voluntarily withdrew its accreditation on February 8, 2020. However, the agency's member directory indicates that RNU is still accredited and there is no indication that the institution voluntarily withdrew.

The Secretary's recognition of an accrediting agency attests that the agency is a reliable authority regarding the quality of education or training offered by the institutions or programs it accredits. In light of the allegations raised by USA Today, the Department needs additional information about the agency's ability to meet its accrediting responsibilities and its compliance with Federal regulations. Therefore, I am requesting that ACICS provide a full and documented response to me by March 25, 2020, per the procedures for the review of agencies during the period of recognition described in Section 602.33. This response must include:

- the agency's accreditation actions on and significant correspondence to or from RNU, to include any accreditation decisions taken by ACICS and any site visit or other reports to the institution;
- the institution's application for initial accreditation, application for renewal of accreditation, and significant correspondence to ACICS, to include the notification of voluntary withdrawal;
- the agency's monitoring activities of and significant correspondence related to those activities to RNU, to include any annual or other reports from the institution and any agency response;
- a narrative response concerning the information included in the article and the agency's compliance with Federal regulations in related areas; and
- any other information and/or documentation to demonstrate compliance with the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition, as related to this inquiry.

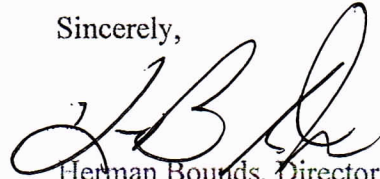
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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The analyst assigned to your agency is Ms. Elizabeth Daggett. Please send the information requested to her via email at elizabeth.daggett@ed.gov. If you have any questions regarding this letter's content or requests, please contact Ms. Daggett by phone at 202-453-6190 or email.

Thank you for your prompt response to the requests for information made in this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. B. Bounds', written in a cursive style.

Herman Bounds, Director
Accreditation Group

Enclosures: